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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please replace the claims with the claims provided in the listing below wherein status, amendments, additions and cancellations are indicated.

1-23. (Canceled)

24. (Previously presented) A wood component, comprising:
an article of wood including altered properties in geometrically defined near-surface areas as compared with an original state of the wood, said geometrically defined near-surface areas having properties of solidified wood melts substantially free from pyrolytic degradation products.

25. (Previously presented) A wood component according to Claim 24, wherein the geometrically defined near-surface areas include cell walls melted in one or several cutting directions so that a diffusion resistance in said geometrically defined areas to ambient media is greater relative to that of the original state of the wood independent of the cutting direction.

26. (Previously presented) A wood component according to Claim 24 or 25, wherein said geometrically defined near-surface areas are visually different from

non-melted wood in the original state with respect to optical properties, absorptivity, reflectivity and diffusing power, and thereby, luster.

27. (Previously presented) A wood component according to Claim 24 or 25, wherein the geometrically defined near-surface areas have a higher hardness and abrasion resistance than non-melted wood in the original state.

28. (Previously presented) A wood component according to Claim 24 or 25, wherein a deformation behavior in the geometrically defined near-surface areas is altered compared with non-melted wood in the original state.

29. (Previously presented) A wood component according to Claim 24 or 25, wherein a bulk of the solidified wood melt is in a geometrically defined area of the wood component below a surface thereof.

30. (Currently amended) A wood component according to Claim 24 or 25, wherein at least one of physical and chemical properties of the geometrically defined near-surface areas is altered from the original state by substances incorporated into the solidified wood melt.

31. (Previously presented) A wood component according to Claim 30,
wherein the incorporated substances are at least one of particles and pigments.

32-46. (Withdrawn)